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Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General*

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1	3
II.	Consultations and exchanges of information	2–3	3
III.	Follow-up action on proposals agreed to at general meetings between organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States	4–55	3
	A. United Nations Secretariat	5–10	3
	B. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)	11	4
	C. United Nations Children's Fund	12	4
	D. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	13–16	4
	E. United Nations International Drug Control Programme Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention	17–18	5
	F. United Nations Development Programme	19	5
	G. United Nations Environment Programme	20	5
	H. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	21–24	5
	I. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	25–28	6
	J. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	29	7

* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, the present report is being submitted on 20 September so as to include all contributions from the United Nations system.

00-65187 (E) 191000

	K.	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	30–32	7
	L.	international Civil Aviation Organization	33–35	7
	M.	International Fund for Agricultural Development	36–38	8
	N.	International Labour Organization	39–41	8
	O.	International Monetary Fund	42	9
	P.	International Telecommunication Union	43	9
	Q.	United Nations Population Fund	44–45	9
	R.	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	46–48	9
	S.	World Bank	49	10
	T.	World Food Programme	50–51	10
	U.	World Health Organization	52–54	10
	V.	World Meteorological Organization	55	11
IV.	Sectoral meeting on youth and employment between the United Nations and the League of Arab States		56–58	11

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 54/9 of 18 November 1999.

II. Consultations and exchanges of information

2. During the period under review, the secretariats of the United Nations and the League of Arab States as well as the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations continued to maintain close contact on matters of mutual concern to the two organizations.

3. The Secretary-General of the League, Dr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid, met with the Secretary-General in September 1999 at United Nations Headquarters. He also met with Mr. Yuli Vorontsov, the High-level Coordinator for the Repatriation of Kuwaiti Missing Persons and Third Nationals and the Return of Kuwaiti Property, in April 2000 and with Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East peace process in May 2000. High-level contacts between the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the League included a meeting between the directors of the educational programmes in the five regional operations of UNRWA and the League host authorities, in November 1999; a meeting between the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and the Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs, in January 2000; and a meeting between the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and the League overseers of refugee affairs, in January 2000. All meetings were held at the League headquarters in Cairo.

III. Follow-up action on proposals agreed to at general meetings between organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States

4. A summary of the reports of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system on their cooperation with the League during the period under review follows. It represents the follow-up action on proposals adopted at the joint meetings held at Geneva in 1997 (A/52/378) and Vienna in 1999 (A/54/180).

A. United Nations Secretariat

1. Department of Public Information

5. The Radio and Central News Service produced programmes covering the following topics: cooperation between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the League in the field of development and the holding of a conference on poor women; signing of an agreement between UNDP and the League for joint action regarding the economy, environment and education; issues before the General Assembly during its fifty-fourth session; the situations in the Sudan and in Iraq; the question of Palestine; and the report of the Bethlehem 2000 project. UN Radio conducted interviews with Esmat Abdel Meguid, Secretary-General of the League, and Mohamed Alfateh Alnasseri, an expert in nuclear disarmament.

6. The United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) carried out a variety of activities. UNIC Cairo, in cooperation with the League, was involved in a regional symposium, "International Investment Arrangements and Their Implications for Arab Countries" (May 1999); a regional seminar, "Human Rights and Development" (June 1999); a regional meeting, "Arab Telecommunication Development" (September 1999); and a "Cairo Telecom 2000" conference (January 2000). UNIC Beirut arranged media coverage for the United Nations and Arab League meeting on youth and employment (May 2000). UNIC Tunis, with the Association des études internationales, organized a one-day seminar at which the Under-Secretary-General of the League spoke.

7. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva publicized statements by representatives of the League and of Arab countries to the Commission on Human Rights, the Conference on Disarmament and treaty bodies. It disseminated information on statements by the Secretary-General and activities by the Security Council on the Middle East, the humanitarian and relief efforts in Sudan and Somalia, and the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

8. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has continued to maintain cooperative relations with the League and its Documentation and Information Centre. Substantial progress has been made in the translation of *UNBIS Thesaurus* terms into Arabic, with terminology taken, wherever possible, from the *ALDOC Thesaurus* in order to standardize search terms for on-line databases. In addition, the Library has provided, upon request, customized training to both the Observer Mission of the League of Arab States and to individual members of the League, focusing on electronic access to information (both current and retrospective) of regional interest.

2. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

9. Since 1998, the Department has organized a series of regional meetings to follow up on the recommendations of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, at which it stressed the need to accelerate regional implementation of Agenda 21 and promote regional cooperation in sustainable development.

10. The Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development in the Arab region is proposed to be held at the headquarters of the League from 26 to 28 October 2000, to be followed immediately by a special session of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region. The meeting is to be organized jointly by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, UNDP, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Department.

B. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

11. UNCHS (Habitat) coordinates activities related to human settlements in the Arab States region with the League. The regional office for Africa and the Arab States invites the League to participate in all its regional conferences and, where applicable and appropriate, to co-organize joint activities. UNCHS also participates, whenever possible, in the Ministers of Housing annual meetings held at League headquarters. Currently, with the League and ESCWA, UNCHS is organizing a regional meeting at the level of Ministers of Housing as part of the event to be held in Bahrain in October 2000, five years after the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul.

C. United Nations Children's Fund

12. UNICEF participates actively in the annual meetings of the Consultative Technical Committee on Childhood and the meetings of the specialized Ministerial Councils of the League, particularly the Council of Ministers of Health.

D. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

13. During 1999, intensive consultations took place between the UNCTAD secretariat and the League regarding the formulation of a comprehensive programme of technical assistance on trade, including related issues addressed by the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is expected that the League secretariat will be associated in the implementation of a comprehensive programme of technical assistance to be developed by UNCTAD and UNDP for the benefit of Arab countries.

14. The representative of the League in Geneva attended and co-chaired a symposium organized by UNCTAD and UNDP in Amman for Arab countries acceding to the WTO. The representative co-chaired a brainstorming meeting organized by UNCTAD and UNDP on the preparations of Arab countries for the WTO Third Ministerial Conference in Seattle. The representative also participated in various events organized by UNCTAD in the field of trade and a conference debate for Geneva-based Permanent Missions of Arab countries.

15. During UNCTAD's tenth Conference, held in Bangkok in February 2000, the League delegation attended a meeting on trade and investment organized by the UNCTAD secretariat to discuss the specific needs of the Arab countries. Consultations also took place in Bangkok with regard to formulating a programme for a symposium (Assistance on the implementation of the Pan-Arab Free Trade Zone) to be organized in Tunisia by UNCTAD in November 2000.

16. Exchanges between UNCTAD and the League continued on a proposed technical assistance project, for which funding is currently being sought, designed

to identify areas where the provision of UNCTAD expertise could enhance the capacity of the League secretariat and its member States to improve trade facilitation, including customs modernization of intra-Arab regional and international trade. The project would identify a programme of assistance that would contribute to a modernized, rationalized and efficient trade infrastructure and administration of trading operations by harmonizing and simplifying customs and transport-related procedures, documents and data within the trade facilitation framework in the region. This would also lead to a strengthened economic integration process through improved trade cooperation between member countries of the League and with the international trading community, thus contributing significantly to the Pan-Arab Free Trade Zone, a priority of the League.

E. United Nations International Drug Control Programme Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

17. Apart from cooperation with individual countries members of the League, the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention maintains regular working contacts with the Arab Interior Ministers Council, a specialized agency of the League. Such contacts have recently been promoted following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat General of the Arab Interior Ministers Council (AIMC) and UNDCP. The memorandum of understanding, which focuses on cooperation in drug control matters, was signed on 11 April 2000 in Vienna by H.E. Mr. Ahmed Ben Mohammed Al Salem, Secretary-General of AIMC, and Mr. Pino Arlacchi, Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, during the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders.

18. After the above meeting, agreement was reached on an action plan for implementing the operational drug control component of the memorandum of understanding. The action plan foresees a regular exchange of information, joint research projects, development of joint technical cooperation activities, and regular operational meetings between the agencies involved.

F. United Nations Development Programme

19. Direct contacts and cooperation with the General Secretariat of the League and its specialized agencies intensified during the period under review. The signing of the cooperation agreement between the League and UNDP by the Secretary-General of the League and the UNDP Administrator on 22 September 1999 marked a new era in this cooperation. The agreement aims at strengthening cooperation in matters of joint concern in public administration and in the social, economic, environmental, cultural, information and human development fields. In support of this cooperation, UNDP financed a project that is helping the League to establish a human development forum and a migration observatory, and to organize a regional conference on women and poverty. Moreover, UNDP indicated its willingness to cooperate in the production of a regional human development report for the Arab region and had supported the League in establishing the Pan-Arab Free Trade Zone.

G. United Nations Environment Programme

20. UNEP continued its support to the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) over the year, with emphasis on priority programmes identified at the annual ministerial meetings. Two memorandums of understanding were further developed between UNEP and CAMRE, in 1998 and in 1999. The objectives of these memorandums of understanding include consolidation of available resources, avoiding duplication, and focusing on the priorities identified by the ministerial councils within the UNEP global environmental programme.

H. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

21. ESCWA and the League co-sponsored four regional preparatory meetings which culminated in the Arab Conference on Integrated Follow-up to United Nations Global Conferences (Beirut, November 1999), held also in cooperation with the League. ESCWA presented a paper at the Seminar on Electronic Data Interchange, organized by the League (Alexandria,

Egypt, October 1999). The paper was entitled "ESCWA and the application of electronic data interchange for facilitating transport and trade in the region". The preparation of an integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq involved extensive consultation and coordination with the individual countries and with the League and its subsidiaries. ESCWA participated in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions of the Arab Women Committee of the League (Cairo, May 1998 and June 1999, respectively). It also attended the meeting "The Arab family and the elderly: the role and the relationship", convened by the League and the Marriage Fund and Women's Federation of the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi, December 1999).

22. ESCWA was represented at the Workshop on the Role of Women in Protecting the Environment against Pollution and Rationalizing the Use of Resources (Cairo, April 1999). The Workshop was organized by the League and the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), in cooperation with the UNEP regional office for Western Asia. It was agreed that ESCWA would assist in the preparation and distribution of guidelines on the subject and would continue its follow-up and cooperation activities relating to women and the environment. ESCWA participated in the Fourth International Conference on Water Resources Management, Use and Policies in Dry Areas (Amman, December 1999), co-sponsored by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), at which it presented two papers, one entitled "Aspects of desalination in the ESCWA region" and the second, "The socio-economic dimension of the debate on pricing of irrigation water".

23. ESCWA participated in a regional symposium on policy assessment and modalities for cost recovery in ensuring water supply for irrigation and the impact on agricultural production, organized by the Damascus office of AOAD (Damascus, October 1999) and a regional seminar organized by AOAD on increasing women's participation in rural development and productive activities (Cairo, September 1999), at which it presented a paper, "The future of women's development role in cities, suburbs and rural areas in the ESCWA region". Both organizations AOAD and ESCWA co-sponsored an expert group meeting on the harmonization of norms and standards for selected agricultural commodities to facilitate trade in the ESCWA region (Beirut, April 1999).

24. ESCWA also participated in the International Conference on Regional Aquifer Systems in Arid Zones: Managing Non-renewable Resources, organized by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) (Tripoli, November 1999). Moreover, in cooperation with UNESCO's regional office, ALECSO, and the Lebanese National Hydrology Commission, ESCWA held an expert group meeting on the harmonization of environmental standards in the water sector of ESCWA member States (Beirut, September/October 1999). The *Bulletin of Arab Industrial Statistics*, a joint publication of ESCWA and the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), is issued once every two years. The two organizations also co-organized, with the Islamic Development Bank, a training workshop on industrial and construction statistics (Beirut, November/December 1999).

I. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

25. The Cairo office of UNESCO continues to cooperate with certain specialized organizations of the League. During the period under review, the office was represented at meetings of the League Joint Executive Committee for Environment and Development and of its subcommittee on desertification and the environment. The League is also regularly invited to attend all UNESCO/Cairo regional activities, especially on ecology, hydrology and geology, for consultation and exchange of experiences.

26. Within the framework of the ongoing cooperation between UNESCO and ALECSO, several meetings and workshops were jointly organized in the Arab region around themes such as groundwater protection, the biosphere reserves and sustainable development, hydrology, hydraulic engineering and river basins, and the use of remote sensing and geographical information systems to observe and combat desertification. Since 1995, UNESCO has cooperated with ALECSO in the development and dissemination of the UNESCO statistical analysis software, called Internationally developed Data Analysis and Management Software (IDAMS).

27. UNESCO also cooperates with the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA), with whom it reached an agreement to strengthen cooperation in training activities for journalists. FANA will be invited to send representatives to a UNESCO workshop on the Internet and the work of news agencies, to be organized in late 2000.

28. The Arab State Broadcasting Union (ASBU), a specialized agency of the League, has been cooperating with UNESCO in the "Screens without frontiers" project by contributing a number of programmes from the Arab States to the project. The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) Council, at its twentieth session in March 2000, approved US$ 45,000 for a project submitted by ASBU and designed to strengthen its programme distribution mechanism and enhance the quality of video and audio productions. UNESCO/IPDC has provided funds for a number of regional and country-specific projects in member States of the League.

J. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

29. UNHCR and the League are pursuing efforts, both at a bilateral level and within the framework of the United Nations system, to strengthen their cooperation in areas related to refugees and global humanitarian issues of common concern. These efforts resulted in the signing on 27 June 2000 of a cooperation agreement by UNHCR and the League. The conclusion of the agreement will pave the way for the organization of a regional (informal) conference on refugees and migration in the Arab region (excluding Palestinians); collaboration between UNHCR and ALECSO to identify areas of educational assistance to refugees; strengthening UNHCR cooperation with other specialized institutions of the League in areas of common concern; convening of seminars on refugee law and basic principles of international protection for government officials, non-governmental organizations and others jointly identified by the two organizations; and the exchange of expertise, documents and reports regarding issues of common concern.

K. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

30. Given the industrial mandate of both UNIDO and AIDMO, a specialized institution of the League, the bulk of regional activities deployed by UNIDO in the Arab countries are implemented in cooperation with AIDMO, within the framework of a joint communiqué signed in Vienna in December 1999.

31. UNIDO and AIDMO met at UNIDO's headquarters on 30 May 2000 to discuss the first phase of a draft project, "Strengthening and building capacity of AIDMO and its technological information exchange system". It was agreed that an expert group meeting and a seminar on new technologies should be organized and that UNIDO staff should assist AIDMO in organizing Techmart/Intechmart events within an agreed time-frame. UNIDO and AIDMO have agreed to consider activities for joint implementation in other areas related to establishing a regional information system and a pollution prevention programme and setting up a "Regional cleaner production centre".

32. Steps were taken to ensure that cooperation between UNIDO, the League and its specialized institutions are strengthened in important areas related to the development of managerial entrepreneurship, through the training and upgrading of skills of a large number of local entrepreneurs. The cooperation supports productive investment and absorption of technology; capacity-building programmes on technology acquisition; negotiation and technology management; development of small and medium-scale industries through policies, subcontracting and partnership; networking; and basic technical support; assistance in development of private-sector institutions to provide support services; investment and technology promotion and ecologically sustainable and economic industrial energy.

L. International Civil Aviation Organization

33. ICAO maintains close liaison with the League on matters relating to civil aviation, particularly through the ICAO regional office in Cairo, in order to ensure the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation in the region. ICAO works closely with the Arab Civil Aviation Commission (ACAC), a

specialized organization of the League. On 29 November 1999, letters of cooperation between ICAO and ACAC were signed at ICAO headquarters. ICAO participates on a regular basis in ACAC meetings, including the annual General Assembly. ICAO supported an ACAC seminar on the implementation of communications, navigation and surveillance/air traffic management (CNS/ATM) systems (Rabat, February 1999). Also, ACAC and ICAO prepared and submitted, in March 1999, two technical cooperation projects: the first, on the planning and implementation of CNS/ATM systems in the Arab world, with a total budget of approximately $500,000; the second, on the restructuring of civil aviation facilities in Arab countries, with a total cost estimated at $370,000. Both projects are under review by ACAC for funding and implementation.

34. An ICAO aviation security seminar for the Middle East region (Beirut, 9-12 November 1999) was attended by 81 delegates from 21 States, 11 airlines and 4 international organizations. It was the third seminar held in the region over a period of two years. Furthermore, an aviation security seminar was also held in Morocco (22-26 May 2000) with 185 participants from 40 States and 3 regional organizations. Moreover, members of the League benefited from several training courses/workshops held in the ICAO subregional aviation security training centres in Casablanca and Amman from 1998 to 2000.

35. The third meeting of the Middle East Traffic Forecasting Group (Cairo, 8-12 November 1999), with 10 participants from five Middle East States discussed methodologies for the development of forecasts from flight information region data and additional forecast requirements requested by various sub-groups of ICAO.

M. International Fund for Agricultural Development

36. The level of indirect cooperation with IFAD has been mainly bilateral, between the League's affiliate institutions such as the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Bank for African Economic Development, the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD).

37. IFAD supported 74 projects in 13 League countries (including two in the West Bank and Gaza), under its Regular Programme and the Special Programme for Africa. IFAD's total contribution amounts to $3.629 billion. This represents about 15 per cent of all projects approved, and 17 per cent of all IFAD's loans made to date. IFAD has worked with the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development in seven areas or countries (West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Syrian Arab Republic, Oman and Yemen) on a total of 15 projects. The Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development contributes $292 million. In addition IFAD co-financed with the Arab Bank for African Economic Development, a development finance institution of the League, one project in Zimbabwe.

38. In addition to designing and financing projects, IFAD provides technical assistance grants, largely — but not exclusively — in support of adaptive research in areas of special relevance to smallholders, the transfer of appropriate technologies, and networking. Grants worth $8.8 million have been supported by IFAD, mainly through and in cooperation with the two leading League institutions, AOAD and ACSAD.

N. International Labour Organization

39. ILO maintained close cooperation with the League and particularly with its specialized agency, the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), by conducting joint activities and coordinating work pertaining to issues of common interest. The two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2000, with respect to employment in the Palestinian Territories. It is designed to promote regular and close consultations and dialogues with the concerned parties in the Arab region, including ILO constituents, in particular the Palestinian Authority and the pertinent regional and international organizations. The memorandum refers to collaboration, in particular, in the fields of labour administration, employment policies, vocational training and guidance, occupational safety and health, labour codes, social security, information, and workers' education. Particular importance will be attached to efforts for securing adequate levels of funding from donors for joint activities between ILO and the League and its specialized agency ALO, and for establishing a funds-in-trust.

40. Two coordination meetings were held during the period under review to discuss ways and means to enhance collaboration and to establish a programme of joint activities with ALO. ILO and the ALO Institute on Occupational Health and Safety in Damascus maintained close working relations for carrying out joint activities, including seminars and workshops and translation, into Arabic, of ILO publications.

41. ILO and ALO also started work on a database on labour market information in the Arab region, utilizing ILO's key indicators of the labour market. ILO continued to provide technical and financial assistance to the Regional Arab Programme for Labour Administration of ALO.

O. International Monetary Fund

42. Cooperation between IMF and the League and its specialized agencies is limited. In late 1999, the League expressed interest in the IMF's training and technical assistance opportunities in national accounts, and the IMF Statistics Department suggested holding a joint seminar with the League on the topic in 2001 or 2002. In the context of its ongoing study on trade relations among the Arab Al Mashreq countries, the Middle Eastern Department of IMF recently requested information and reports from the League on the status of the Pan-Arab Free Trade Zone.

P. International Telecommunication Union

43. During the period under review, ITU, through its regional office for the Arab States and Arab States Unit, maintained its cooperation with the League. Besides participating with the League in a number of meetings, task forces and seminars, ITU continued to cooperate with the League in developing telecommunication in the Arab region and to exchange information.

Q. United Nations Population Fund

44. UNFPA provided the League, and particularly its Department of Social Affairs, with substantial technical, institutional and financial assistance on conducting basic demographic analyses, issuing publications, developing a data bank and disseminating information, through support to the Population Research Unit. Furthermore, in the context of its regional programme, UNFPA supported the Pan-Arab Child and Maternal Health Survey, carried out in 10 Arab countries, which was superseded this year by a more comprehensive reproductive health survey, the Pan-Arab Family Health Survey (PAPFAM).

45. The League, with continuous support from UNFPA, plays a role in reinforcing regional coordination in population matters, assists in establishing a network among national population policy committees, helps to develop effective regional population policies that are in harmony with cultural and ethical values and rights, and strengthens complementarity of action among the national population councils and other concerned bodies to address issues of high relevance to the Arab region. Such issues include the implications of social and economic development and reforms and globalization on the quality of life of the Arab population. The Population Research Unit, with continuous support from UNFPA, could play an important role in assisting countries in the region to share, analyse, disseminate and apply population research findings and to design and implement follow-up strategies to achieve the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and other conference plans of action. The PAPFAM programme will generate the reproductive health indicators necessary for monitoring success in achieving the ICPD goals.

R. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

46. Cooperation remained close between UNRWA and the League during the period under review. UNRWA maintains contact with the League secretariat in Cairo and with the Permanent Observer of the League in New York, participates in regular sectoral meetings organized by the League, and seeks to foster cooperation between its officials and the Arab League secretariat at various levels and in various forums.

47. High-level contacts between UNRWA and the League included a meeting between the Commissioner-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs at League headquarters in Cairo in January 2000. The Commissioner-General also met the

League's overseers of refugee affairs during their meeting at the League headquarters, also in January 2000. The ninth annual joint meeting between UNRWA and the League's Council of Educational Affairs for the Children of Palestine (Cairo, November 1999) reviewed educational services offered to Palestine refugees in the host countries and issues facing the UNRWA education programme. UNRWA's Director of Education also attended a meeting between the United Nations and the League on "Youth and employment" (Beirut, 23-25 May 2000).

48. UNRWA continued to benefit from the generous financial support of the League and its continuing efforts to urge donors to increase voluntary contributions to UNRWA. In 1999, League member States contributed $9.6 million in cash and in kind to the UNRWA regular budget and extrabudgetary special assistance programmes. UNRWA's critical financial situation, as well as its role, were the subject of considerable discussion in League meetings during the period under review. The League reiterated its support for UNRWA humanitarian activities, expressed concern over the repeated funding shortfalls faced by the Agency and their implications for Palestinian refugees and the host authorities, and stressed the importance of increased contributions to the Agency by the international community.

S. World Bank

49. Cooperation and coordination between the World Bank and the League continues to be close and fruitful. The World Bank participates in almost all of the general meetings on cooperation, as well as in other thematic meetings, between the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and the League. Beyond that, the World Bank has specifically cooperated with the League in several other areas, by providing World Bank research papers and other reports and publications to the League specialized agencies, and through continued collaboration with the League's specialized agencies on important developmental (social and economic) issues, cooperation on matters related to the Pan-Arab Free Trade Zone and other issues concerning trade in general, and participation of staff from the League's specialized agencies in World Bank workshops and seminars.

T. World Food Programme

50. The World Food Programme and the League have initiated the process of formalizing arrangements for cooperation between the two organizations. A draft memorandum of cooperation between the two is being reviewed and will be finalized in the near future.

51. The context for cooperation between the two organizations is provided by WFP's ongoing operations in 14 of the League countries and the presence of several funding and League-affiliated technical organs with whom fruitful partnerships could be built, at both the policy and operational levels. WFP operations in League countries assist nearly 10 million poor and food-insecure people, involving over half a billion United States dollars worth of resources. Its emergency, relief and recovery operations assist nearly 8 million people, while its development projects help about 2 million people. In order to improve the effectiveness of these operations, WFP will be seeking participation of the technical and financial organs of the League, particularly the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Desert Lands and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

U. World Health Organization

52. Close collaboration continues between the WHO regional office in Alexandria and the League, in particular, with the Council of Arab Ministers of Health. The WHO Regional Director has participated in all the regular meetings of the Council, and the WHO Director-General participated in the most recent meeting. The various technical units in the regional office also participated in technical meetings organized by the League, where different technical topics were discussed and several technical reports were presented. During the past year the topics included tobacco control; children's health and children's rights; prevention and control of genetic disorders; industrial pollution; environmental education, advocacy and promotion; health legislation and bioethics; drug production and clinical pharmacy practice; an Arab strategy to strengthen nursing services; control of HIV/AIDS; continued collaboration with the Arab Board for Medical Specializations and the Arab Centre for Medical Publications and Literature, and the Arab Strategy to Combat Drug Addiction.

53. WHO is also actively involved in the project on family and community health. The Pan-Arab Project on Family Health is one example of the close collaboration between the WHO regional office and the League. Close collaboration is also ongoing with ALO in the provision of technical support to develop a database on occupational diseases and workplace accidents in member States.

54. Cooperation also continued with the League regarding the environmental impact of industrial activity, air quality guidelines, water conservation, combating desertification and the Arab Plan on the Environment. Working relations are ongoing through the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs and three of its bodies: the Joint Committee of the Programme on Environment Education, Information and Awareness in Arab Countries; and the Standing Committee on the Control of Industrial Pollution in Arab Countries.

V. World Meteorological Organization

55. The ongoing cooperative joint projects with the League and its specialized organizations include the project on sand and dust storms in the Arab region; joint activities for the exchange of meteorological and related data and products, including guidelines on relationships in commercial meteorological activities in the Arab region; activities within the framework of the WMO climate information and prediction services project (CLIPS) in the Arab region; improving the Arabic linguistic services in WMO; activities within the WMO Climate Variability and Predictability Project (CLIVAR); training courses for meteorological personnel from Arab countries at the WMO Regional Meteorological Training Centre in Cairo and at the Syrian Meteorological Department in Damascus; participation of WMO in the annual meetings of the League Permanent Committee on Meteorology, consisting of the Directors of the National Meteorological Service of Arab Countries, and in the meetings of the eight working groups and panels of that Committee.

IV. Sectoral meeting on youth and employment between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

56. As recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/9 and in accordance with the decisions of the 1999 general meeting of the United Nations and the League on cooperation, a sectoral meeting on youth and employment between the United Nations and the League was held at ESCWA headquarters (23-25 May 2000).

57. Representatives of the United Nations system at the meeting included ILO, ESCWA, UNESCO, WHO, the World Bank, UNRWA and the United Nations Secretariat (Department of Political Affairs). From the League, participants included the Arab Labour Organization, the Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the Arab Administrative Development Organization, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development, the Abu-Dhabi Fund for Development, and the League secretariat.

58. The meeting was co-chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the League and the Executive Secretary of ESCWA. The participants discussed 14 working papers, reviewed progress in cooperation in the field of youth and employment, and made a number of recommendations for future action. Consultations on cooperation between the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the League Department of Political and International Affairs were held informally at the meeting.